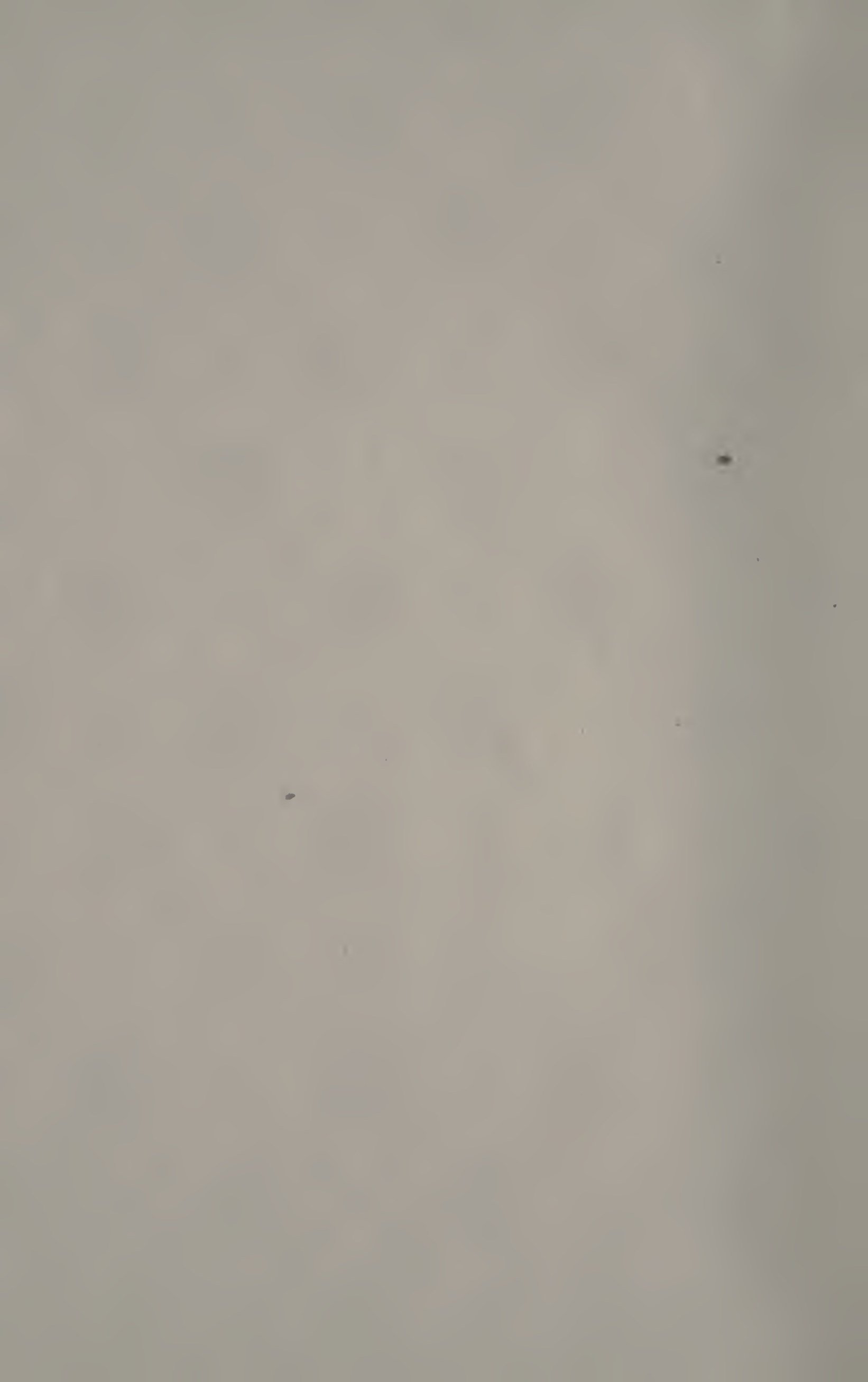


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1923







IDLE HOUR RHYMES

Books by
ETHEL L. WORSLEY SMITH

* * * *

RAGWEED AND CLOVERS (*Verse*).

CHILD STORIES (*Prose*).

IDLE HOUR RHYMES.

Idle Hour Rhymes

by

ETHEL L. WORSLEY SMITH

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INSCRIBED WITH ALL AFFECTION
TO
THE DEAR FOLKS OF THE OLD HOME
AND ALL CLOSE FRIENDS WHO
GATHERED THERE.

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THE COMING OF SPRING

Airy, fairy Spring is dancing
Toward us o'er the hills,
Hear the gurgling and the rushing
Of the swelling rills;
And the feathered songsters winging
From a warmer clime,
Herald sweetly in their singing,
The coming glad Springtime.

Every bud is teeming, swelling,
Wildly warm winds blow,
The joyous news they're telling
That we all may know;
Too the splashing, dashing showers
And the sunshine bring
Earth's fair carpeting of flowers,
Welcome, lovely Spring!

EVENTIDE

Twilight is stealing
Softly o'er the woods,
Wind the reeds are reeling
Where the blueflags stood;
Stars are brightly peeping
And from pools among the bogs.
Where the mist is creeping,
Comes the chorus of the frogs.

Afar the plaintive calling
Of the lonely whippoorwill,
With the cadence rising, falling,
In the echo o'er the hill;
Then again the frogs' lone greeting
Loudly in the silence rings,
The ceaseless chorus' beating
And darkness closes in.

THE QUEEN OF MONTHS

When the blue is in the sky,
And fleecy clouds drift by,
And all the world seems so sweet, so gay,
Without the wind or breeze
To stir the flowering trees,
Yet all the air is sweetness—it is May.

The hum of honey-bees
Is as chanting in the trees,
As they tumble in and out the dainty flowers.
And butterflies
With the bumble-bees vie,
Here and there throughout the thickets bower.

The robins on the wing,
And the mocking bird that sings
In the tree tops where the blossoms crowded lie,
Tremble there with glee,
In utter ecstasy,
Swelling song in sweet abandon to the skies.

The sunshine, warm and bright,
On snowy blossoms in its light,
Adds a drowsy, lazy languor to the noon;
Exquisite odor drifts,
And the soul it seems to lift,
Through May's mesmerizing, tantalizing croon.

The mottled shine and shade
'Neath the trees are softly laid,
Throughout the sweet and dreamy summer day;
There Harmony, in perfect place,
Nature blends with airy Grace,
The Queen of Months is charming, fairy May.

IN A GARDEN

A wilderness of bloom
Is this bee-haunted bower
In the month of June;
When the crickets croon,
And bird-songs banish gloom
From this labyrinth of flowers.

There, in drowsy dreaminess,
Where clambering roses doze
In the tangled sweetness,
Is the abode of cherished Rest,
When the sunset in the west
Is folding into night's repose.

THE AWAKENING

E'en my gentlest caress,
That most breathlessly I press,
Serves to stir you from your rest ;
And the tiny fingers rise,
Pointing idly toward the skies,
As you ope' your baby eyes.
The tremulous dainty sigh—
As you view in mild surprise
Me, who loves you, sitting nigh—
Is as perfume of the rose
While you lie there resting so,
Still drowsy from your slumber, well I know.
And as I chat with you the while
You bestow on me, devoid of guile,
A treasured prize—a baby's smile.

HOME

I will tell you of home that in memory
Gleams out through the mist of the years,
With a simplicity that is pure as the sunlight,
And that moves me to dreaming and tears;
That home filled with love and with labor,
That home filled with joys and with woes,
And a sweetness as of the wild honeysuckle
There will linger in memory to life's close.
The wild birds and the bees and the blossoms,
And the low, graceful sweep of the grain,
Blends with the stately elms and the maples,
About this home in my fancy again.

O Artist, with magical brushes,
And with hand of Genius' own,
Paint for me on your canvas
These pictures in memory sown!
The likeness of two loving faces—
O Painter, can you but draw
From the misty blue past to your canvas,
These features that you never saw?
Fashion one with strength, yet so loving—
A being so thoughtful and true,
A man among men whate'er his calling,
Clean and good, I caution of you.

Then change your brushes, O Painter!
And deal with a much lighter hand;
And on the fabric's cloudy background,
Too, paint this picture from memory's land.
Use only your gentlest touches
And tintings that are modest and fine,
But excel in your art, O Painter,
With the eyes of this mother of nine!
Paint them dark, paint them deep, I would guide you,
And over them spread a clear sight
That is softened and mellowed by sadness,
And that dims their sweet tender light.

The head neatly poised on the shoulders
Above the bosom so broad and so deep,
Where for many years without abatement
She rocked weary toddlers to sleep;
Again I hear, as she sang it,
The lullaby, tenderly sweet,
And I see, in my fancy, the children
Grouped gracefully about at her feet.
Two fair buds from among them
Too frail, too tender, were they
For the storms life ever is prone to,
And both were taken away;
And we laid them to rest on the hillside
Where the wild rose roisterously grows,
Where the winds carry scent of the orchard's
Pink and white apple blows.

And where in the springtime, from the hollow,
In the evening's purple-mantled repose,
The chant of the frogs soothe and urge unto slumber
All poor earthly woes.
Reminiscently I dream o'er the heart ties
Of home—let me breath the word low—
And as softly as the sighing of the maples
When gentlest of spring breezes blow,
Let the rain-dove help me to voice it
With its sweet and lingering tones,
That I may express, in a measure,
My sacred memory of home.

THE CLUB DANCE

The rustle of gowns and high heeled leather,
The dull rich luster of the polished floor,
The flowers faint odor, daintily delightful,
Where sparkling lights their brilliance pours;
Where the music swells, and floats, and melts,
Like the billowy sea 'neath the moon's bright glow,
Well known friends, afar and near,
As swiftly onward the hours go,
Gently swaying to the languorous rhythm
As idly o'er the casement the breezes pour,
While youth is tripping and flitting and gliding and
dancing
Across the ball room floor.

LOVER'S LANE

A fairy land was Lover's Lane
In those enchanted days,
And ever many lovers strolled
Adown that leafy way;
Life was like a story
Within that bower fair,
And the sunlight peeped in brightly
And mellowed softly there.

The noontide, languorous, drowsy,
Bade the flowers nod and droop,
While Plenty's cornucopia bent
Beneath its weight of fruit.
The heavy shade of noble trees,
That loomed high above in state,
Was thrown in great profusion
O'er the wind-swung picket gate.

The old mill pond in slumber
Lounged beside the dusty path,
Reflecting clouds in dreamland,
'Neath the sunset's aftermath.
So mystical, so fanciful,
Grew the quiet lane at night,
Bathed in a sea of shimmering silver
Of the moon's bewitching light.

And twinkling stars peeped from the blue
To lend their tiny rays,
The rustling leaves held fairy sprites
That danced along the way;
A fairy land it was, forsooth,
For Dan Cupid there held reign
And gladdened hearts he pierced with darts,
Down in Lover's Lane.

DEALING WITH FATE

Into a Mind filled with sweet Content,
And Purity, Love and Innocence,
Stole keen Suspicion and Worry blent
As if clearly challenged, the Will was bent
To thwart, to conquer this discontent;
Then entered Hope and Promise sweet,
And Trust grew daintily at their flowery feet,
But cunning Deception gained its day
Then the Heart was threatened a slow decay;
Wounded Pride sought vengeance, cruelly sweet,
But Fate desisted and gave Love absolute.
Angrily the sharp stinging rod was kissed.

Contentment strove to enter once more
But Faith was shattered at the very door;
Hope, Promise, Patience—all were given—
But sadly each from the Mind was driven;
Love be the absolute monarch—did Fate insist,
Tearfully the sharp, stinging rod was kissed.
Reason came and wielded her sway
With priceless Wisdom, whose sunlit ray
Gleams adown all darkened pathways,
And Sweetness grew where it ne'er had been
And Love reigned supremely until life's end
Meekly, mutely kissing the rod.

A SIMPLE FAITH

A quiet field with sunshine,
Molten and mellowing, where
The wild cranesbill blossoms
In delightful profusion. There
In the near silence the anthem
In the wild-bird's melody,
Wafts through the Sabbath's service,
Coming directly from God to me.

A quiet field with sunshine,
Gathering the springtime flowers,
Feeling the Creator's presence
In the wordless, gentle power
That surges through and through me,
One soul 'mid the world of men,
Without answer for life's strange being—
The strife and the suffering.

A quiet field with sunshine
Where the fragrant breeze blows free,
There the great plan of the Creator
Again checks and puzzles me;
Yet I sense a wonderful power
That is grand and free and full,
An influence, more than earthly,
Distinctly I feel the pull.

A quiet field with sunshine,
I lift my eyes and behold
The wonderful works of Creation
Moving smoothly along as of old.
Though the veil of the Great Beyond
Be not lifted that I may see,
Yet the God that rules the world
Will plan and care for me.

MY PATH

Instead of walking out in the sunshine
I walk in the shadow ;

The world's gayest pastimes I seldom may know,
But I glean of life's fullness, in puny endeavor,

In cheering and comforting hearts burdened low.
In the dim purple valley, I walk with each sister,

Each brother, a pilgrim on life's bleak, rocky road.
I search out the rainbows that gleam through the
mist clouds,

And carry some part of the heart's weary load.
I laugh when they stumble, but reach quickly to save
them

The brunt of the shock the stumble would bring,
Then cheer and encourage the steps that lead up-
ward,

About the weary shoulders my arm lightly fling.
I tell them the joys I see above 'round the corner

And show them the back path be safely gone o'er.
That it might have been worse, and it might have
been better,

Although there was failure—it need never be
more ;
And point out more plainly God-given joys all about
us,

As I nurse the galled shoulder and cool furrowed
brow.

I look with compassion on worn, weary features,
And unnoticed, in prayer, my head meekly bow.
Though the burden grow weightier and despair all
apparent,
My ears seem to fail to hear the heart broken cry,
God grant—I lift but the more and encourage the
better,
Till at last the great barrier be safely passed by.
After clouds comes the sunshine to bless and to
brighten,
The sigh of relief and smile, weary and worn,
Be all the soul need to repay and to lighten
The sisterly sympathy and suffering borne.
Just the look on plain features of hope and of trust-
ing,
Just a quiver of muscle, a tear, or a prayer,
A broken word of admission, of faith, or of feeling,
Be counted as joy that is treasured and rare.
So instead of walking out in the sunshine
I walk in the shadow.
The world's gayest pastimes I seldom may know,
But I glean of life's fullness, in puny endeavor,
In cheering and comforting hearts burdened low.

TO MY PIANO

Awake, my instrument, my piano,
With thy tones like a clear, trickling stream,
Awake and banish dark moods of the present
That this sadness may seem as a dream.

GYPSY JIM

Canto I.

AROUND THE CAMPFIRE

Gently blew the east wind, gently
Blew its chilling breath around them,
Blew as only do the spring-winds
That lightly chill, the while caressing;
Lifted high the feathery ashes
Of the willow and the maple,
That beside the crackling embers
Deeply lay in gray-white masses.
And the fire-light shone upon them
As they sat in broken circle,
Tinting, all the shades of sunset—
Rose-red, gray or shimmering yellow.
In wild abandon tinting
Age with youthful colors only,
While youth in merry pastime
Bore the somber gray of shadow.
At one side the glowing campfire
Sat the men in earnest study,
Sat conversing of a horse-trade
That had that day relieved the dullness
Of the hours upon the trail.
At the farther side the fire
Sat the women of the party,

Swaying back and forth in laughter
As the greasy cards they shuffled;
Laughed and snapped their fingers sharply
As the trick they gained—abandoned,
The while the brilliant colors
Of their raiment, flapped and fluttered,
Fluttered in the wind upon them.
At one side this group of gypsies
Where the shadows met and parted,
There lounged, beside his bright new saddle,
With its odor of new leather,
Thoughtful Jim—the gypsy orphan.
Long he looked into the fire,
Seldom winking, seldom moving,
With his bright mind alert, pursuing
The thoughts that long were his companions.
And the young folks romping near him,
Now in firelight, now in darkness,
Laughed and stopped to gaily tease him,
Calling him to come and join them;
And they shouted in derision
At his curt and low refusal.
Foremost of these gay ones, ever,
Darting here and there about the fire,
Foremost ever, Preciosa,
With her wealth of long, dark tresses,
Queen and flower of gypsy girls.
Well she knew that whither went she

Far or near about the night-camp
Followed, was she, and alertly,
By the dark eyes of the orphan.
Long he sat and gazed about him
Hearing not the trading story,
Heeding not the shouts of triumph
Of the women in the firelight.
But he noted Preciosa,
Singled her, from her companions;
And he heard the breezes whisper,
Whisper in the branches near him;
Knew a crescent moon was shining,
Shining in the blue behind him;
Heard a distant pony whinny,
Roused up at the sound of hoof-beats,
As by slow and heavy movements
Came the old horse, white and bony,
Grazing up within the fire-light.
Thus the hours arrived,—departed—
'Till at last the merry children
Worn and wearied by their playing
Came and climbed into the wagons,
Came to sleep and dream of playing,
And the card-game and the story
Were abandoned, till the morning.
Still the orphan sat and pondered,
Sat beside the dying fire,
Heard a bird call in the woodland

And of wings that in the tree-leaves
Fluttered swiftly in the silence.
Soon the new moon sank from vision,
And the night-wind in its slumber
Stirred and sighed amid the branches.
From afar came sounds of horses
Grazing on the grassy roadside,
Nearing the covered wagons slowly,
Slowly grazing up about them.
And as was the nature of them
When they passed the dying fire,
Frightened, and with wild ways passed it,
Or looked and grazed their way by calmly.
One, a thorough-bred, a bay mare,
Halted, and with look inquiring,
Eyed the scene that lay before her.
And with ears high-pitched and listening
Came to the boy, beside the embers.
And the orphan stroked her muzzle's velvet,
Stroked and smiled in proud possession.
Long she stood with head low drooping
Sniffing at her master,—looking.
But anon—the stroking halted,
Halted and the heavy breathing
Told that, with his head upon his saddle,
Slumber claimed the gypsy orphan.

Canto II.

ON THE TRAIL

Where the woods rang back in echo,
Rang and died out in the distance,
Stood big Jesse, the old man;
Stood and shouted his directions
With his hand clinched high above him,
And his dark face lit with anger.
Cursed and shouted 'till the dumb-brutes
Flinched, as closely he passed by them.
Here and there the men were hastening
With their horses and their loading,
While the children urged each other crossly,
Urged in low and nervous voices.
And the women of the party
Gained their places in the wagons,
That were decked with colored windows,
Decked in pictures and gay colors.
At one side this group of gypsies,
Stood the cause of all this anger,
All this hurry and confusion.
Stood a group of waiting farmers,
In their clean and work-day clothing,
Noting all this that was passing,
Noting all things 'round about them;
Smiling at their ease and swiftness
In dispersing bands of gypsies.

Soon the heavy wagons started,
Amid the shouting and the cursing,
Started with loud creaks and groaning,
And the herd of stock went after,
Followed, with the dogs among them,
Rigged in gay and splendid trappings
Of bright nickle, brass and colors,
And with tassels and with strappings.
In the rear of this procession
A white horse was slowly shambling
With two youngsters perched upon her.
The bravest singing, singing idly,
As they started on their journey,
Singing in a child voice, sweet and plaintive,
That floated to their hearers,
The closing lines of his lone song.

Song

“Oh! see her little foot prints on the sand,
See her little foot prints on the sand.”

Down the grove-road, shady, quiet,
Where the trees in silent grandeur
Locked their branches o'er the roadway,
Wound the group of trailing gypsies,
Wound out to the sunny prairie
Where the road stretched white in sunlight,
Stretched far off into the distance.
On they journey, with their begging,

Journey with their fortune-telling,
At the cross-roads halt, inquiring,
Then pass slowly on, 'till evening,
On, until the evening shadows
Fell about them, then, at sunset,
And the farmers passing homeward
Were each halted in their passing,
Each were pressed with lively horse-trades,
Pressed each with these trades and bargains.
And the equines, aged and crippled
Or that suffered labored breathing—
Each, in care of skillful gypsies
Skilled in old-world gypsy tricks and craftiness,
Pranced and bore in ways apparent
All the vigor of their youthtime,
All their youthtime vim and soundness.
As darkness came, the dusky traders
Grouped about their one great kettle
Steaming with a strange new odor,
Of the game and of the garden,
Of the grain and of the Orient,
That were steaming all together.
Long conversed they, laughed together,
Talked of trusty tricks and bargains,
Of their skill in trading horses.

Canto III.

WATCHING

Long beside the rude, low pallet,
Softened by new straw and branches,
Sat a motley group of gypsies,
Sat conversing in low whispers;
While with careful step a woman
Gently came unto the bedside,
Came up bearing broth of pigeon,
And with gentle hand administered
To the want of the one brother
Of the charming Preciosa;
And the group of curious watchers
One by one dispersed, departed,
Leaving but the vigil keepers—
The Orphan, old and cunning Myra,
And the frightened Preciosa.
As they sat throughout the night-time
Barely speaking but in whisper,
A great change came o'er the sleeper,
Came and conquered the great fever.
And the watchers looked and chuckled,
Smiled and looked, and yet again,
And the maiden, deeply grateful,
Poured out thanks unto the others.
For old Myra's care and nursing,
And to the boy, for faithful watching,

For the game he brought in daily,
For bringing there the white physician,
When the gypsies' simple treatment
Was defeated by the fever.
And the orphan's handsome features
Were illumined by her speaking,
Speaking of her grateful feeling,
And his lips were opened straightway
And he told of hopes and longings,
Told of thinking and of planning,
How he longed to live as white-men,
Not the life of roaming gypsies.
And the listeners saw the sadness
Creep upon his youthful features.

Canto IV.

THE WOOING

Many days arrived—departed—
Came and passed into remembrance,
Since the evening by the sick-bed,
When the watchers kept their vigil,
Kept their vigil through the night-time.
And the white man's fields were yellow,
Yellow with the ripening harvests;
And the moon shone full and mellow,
Shone upon the woods and highway,
Shone upon the camp of gypsies.

Lighting all in daylight brightness.
And the young folks, laughing gaily,
Wandered 'neath the shady grove trees.
Gypsy Jim now went with them,
At his side roved Preciosa.
And the young pair turned and wandered
Down a moonlit path together;
Wandered idly on in silence,
Noting how the shady woodland
Was relieved by moonlit spaces;
Heard the call of the night-heron,
And the twitter of the small birds
That were resting in the branches;
And in the silence of the forest
Hearing acorns that were dropping,
Falling in the quiet woodland.
And the youth and his young sweetheart
Followed then the curving brooklet
That wound, onward, toward the wagons;
Followed 'till the gypsy campfire
Gleamed out brightly through the woodland.
They halted, and they listened,
Listened to the rippling brooklet
That seemed to sadly murmur,
Murmur sadly in the night-time.
The moonlight shone o'er Preciosa,
Shone upon her lovely features,
And the orphan gazed upon her

As he told again his planning—
Told of hopes and dreams of living
As the white man lived, by toiling,
Not as did the roving gypsy
Live by trading and by thieving,
By their tricking and by begging.
And he told, in voice of eloquence,
Of the sacred love he bore her;
And by his earnest pleading
Gained the lovely maiden's promise.
And as back to camp they wandered,
Slowly wandered to the fire-light,
The harvest moon above them,
In its vast and wondrous grandeur,
Beamed softly down upon them.

GYPSY SONG

This starry evening, we will ramble
Where the waters ripple low,
I will tell you a sweet story
'Neath the harvest moon's bright glow.

I will tell you of a love, Dear,
That is ever fond and true,
As we linger where the moonlight
Pours its grandeur over you.

You—my queen of all the gypsies—
With dark splendor in your eyes,
I will tell love's wondrous story
That will live beyond the skies.

Canto V.

QUEEN MANDA

With the jet-black hair hung loosely,
Streaming loosely, o'er her shoulders,
With the scarlet robe draped 'round her
By the bands of faded ribbon,
And upon the arms and fingers,
On the shoulders and the head-dress,
Were all manner of bright coin,
Were all kinds of glistening bangles;
While awkward, flattened ear-rings
Hung and dangled through her tresses.
With her black eyes glancing 'round her
At the young ones of the party,
Of Pimetro's band of gypsies,
Old Queen Manda told this story.

Story

Once there roved a youthful gypsy,
Shrewd at bargains in the trading,
Shrewd and honest in his dealings,
Clean and pure his youthful soul.

And he wooed and won a maiden,
A young maiden of the white race,
Brought her to the gypsy camp-fire,
Loved and humored her—his treasure.
And kind fortune smiled in favor
On his tradings and his dealings,
Waxing rich in honest dealings,
Granting all his young wife's spoken wishes.
And although she loved most dearly—
Loved her doting gypsy husband—
Yet she wearied of their roaming,
Wearied of the life of gypsies,
And in silence, sadly longing,
For the homes and ways of white men.
Thus the first years of the camp-life
Came and passed, without a murmur,
But the knowing old Queen Manda
Knew the longing, mourning, for these.
Alas! one day, the dreaded fever
Came and claimed this joyous husband—
Bore him to the realms far distant,
To the land of the Here-after.
Then a change came o'er the young wife,
And as droop, uprooted flowers—
Droop and die in brilliant sunshine—
So she wilted; drooped before them,
And ere long, in the arms of old Queen Manda
Placed the infant son, their treasure,

Asking for his care and comfort,
For his needs and gentle training;
And in the long shades of the evening,
Smilingly, she died.
Lo! by patient care and nursing
In the years that came thereafter,
Queen Manda saw the fruits of her own efforts—
Saw the babe grow up to manhood,
Saw the likeness of the father,
Brave and strong, taintless, honest,
Likewise bore he the mother's sadness,
Bore her hopes and her great longings.
And—(concluded old Queen Manda)—
None other is this silent youngster,
With his planning and his longing,
With his dreaming and his sighing,
Than thoughtful Jim, the gypsy orphan.

Canto VI

THE DEPARTURE

The sun shone softly o'er them,
Sifting through the trees about them
Shafts of light, all mellow, golden.
And the summer's latest blooming,
In their rank and sturdy manner,
Decked the roadside in their glory.
Faintly church bells now were ringing

From the steeples in the distance,
All in keeping with the morning,
This quiet, Sabbath morning.
And the merry laugh and banter
To the ear, relieved the sadness,
Relieved the brooding muteness,
Of the early morning's quiet.
While lounging high above them
On the sleek and restless equine,
Whose satin flank was shimmering,
Glinting in the sparkling sunlight,
Sat conversing,—Jim the orphan.
Standing 'round him, looking upward,
Were the youthful of the party;
Sitting, listening in grave silence,
Listening in glum disapproval,
At a distance, elder gypsies;
While he told, he now must leave them
To fulfil his hopes and longings,
Leave them, to be swiftly learning,
Learning the alien ways of white men,
Learn to labor swiftly,—well.
Then, once more to them returning
Where'er they camped along the roadside,
Returning for his Preciosa.
Well, he said, he knew the failings,
Knew their ignorance of learning,
But with youth-time still before them,

Hoped to learn and gain in knowledge.
And in answer to loud jeering,
In answer to derisive laughter,
Gently spake he, in this wise :
“We will fail in smaller detail,
Fail in many undertakings,
But in the main we will not weaken,
We will conquer, Preciosa.”

Canto VII.

THE STRUGGLE

In the last days of October
Came the shimmering haze in sunshine,
Came the mellow, glowing far-lights
Of the welcome Indian-summer ;
Welcome with the changing foliage,
Welcome with the brown nuts falling,
Loudly dropping in the woodland.
And the wild grapes hung in clusters,
Purple 'mid the dead leaves' crispness ;
And the farewell notes of robins,
And the winging crow's slow calling
Rang about him, swiftly toiling.
In the heat of summer fierceness,
Up and down the rustling corn rows
'Mid the shocks of frost-tinged fodder.
Toiling thus, strove the weary orphan

For many weeks without abatement,
With his flabby muscles aching,
With his clothing wet upon him,
And the dark hair damply clinging
'Round his noble, boyish forehead.
His young face in its pallor,
And his dark eyes, clear, transparent,
Bore the shades of the Great Reaper.
Thus he toiled throughout the hours,
With the corn dust thick upon him,
Furrowed by the perspiration,
And the white man, passing by him,
Struck with fear by the great pallor,
Bade him halt, and seek attention
From the noted white physician.
Anon! in the neat room, quiet, darkened,
Lay the patient, sad and restless,
Bearing sadly hopes and longings
That were ever his companions.
In the long hours interspersing,
'Twixt the twilight of the evening
And the dawn of early morning,
'Rousing up from his light slumber,
Leaning toward the drowsy watcher,
In low voice, with labored breathing,
Faintly called unto his sweetheart:
"We will conquer, Preciosa."
Then, in recognition of position,
Falling faintly on his pillow.

Canto VIII.

OMEGA

Thus the days sped swiftly onward
And one night time, as the hour
Neared the watcher's dreaded midnight,
At last the final test was placed upon him.
Yet as stern Death hover'd 'round him,
Came and peered upon the sufferer,
He faintly whispered his firm challenge—
“Conquer yet, my Preciosa.”
But all too heavy was the burden interposed upon
him,
And Death beckoned—grimly won the unfair battle.
And the spirit of the orphan
Departed, 'though the hopes and longing,
That were life-blood to his being,
Were unfinished—incompleted;
Departed to his Great Maker, to the Land of the
Hereafter.
And they bore the lifeless form most gently
To the camp of roving gypsies,
To where the camp-fire gleamed out brightly
Through the purple shades of evening;
And the rain dove and the robin
Called out loudly in their passing
Through the cool air of the evening,
Sadly called out their farewell.

And the stream of rushing water,
Where it fell into the valley,
Thundered down in tone of sadness;
And the brightly tinted foliage,
In the varied shades of autumn,
Fell and rustled 'round the night-camp,
While the late year's chilling night-wind,
Whispering through the shedding branches,
Sadly sighed, Farewell, Farewell.
Farewell to hope and promise,
Farewell to youth and labor,
Farewell to life, Farewell.

AT HELEN HUNT JACKSON'S GRAVE

High up among the peaks of Colorado's mountains,
Proudly withdrawn from the petty world below,
Looming in majestic state of grandeur,
Rising high above humanity's poor woes;
Where the sight seeker, eager and expectant,
Up this barrier of rock is prone to wend,
Up where the eye may glean the plains of Kansas
From this mighty promontory—Old Cheyenne.

There, where stately trees crown this place secluded,
Once roamed a woman scribe, who bore wing'd
thoughts
And dreams of silver hue and brightness,
That in the valley's shade, for her, were never
wrought;
And as the lofty, noble promontory
Drew far from greed, from spoils and many
wrongs,
So penned she, thoughts and dreams of brightness,
And to the more lofty aims gave way,
Sweet as mark the melody of song.

Long years after, here the wind sweeps age old tree
tops
And sadly whispers, where her grave alone
In great solitude reposes on its bosom

With naught of marking but a tumbled heap of
stones.
Her one request to all who come far thither,
As duty due, be followed till this day,
That lest her grave's strange marking meet efface-
ment,
Each add but two, and take one rock away.

“NATURE JOYS”

I like to listen an' watch thin's,
Out o' doors the hull year 'roun',
Don't need no business to take my mind,
I jes like sights an' sounds.
'Take fer instince when the eves air drippin'
An' the snow is a'most gone,
An' the sun is shinin' warm an' bright,
An' the days air gettin' long;
When the sassy jays get noisy
An' ye hear geese an' ducks squawk by,
Goin' single file or in a great big wedge
Lak they do when sailin' high.
An' we hear in the early mornin'
The purrie chickens call,
An' then the boomin', boomin',
In kind o' a solemn drawl.
An' ye sit up straight an' listen
To the blue-birds three-toned song,
An' look to see the specks o' blue
As they go bobbin' 'long.
An' there's the black-birds' lively meetin'
Jes a coverin' the hull big tree,
A dippin' an' spreadin' their tail-feathers.
An' a hollerin' "jubilee."
When I hear the "pip-pip" o' the robin
As he curves from tree to tree,

An' it's gettin' nigh to evenin',
That's music 'nough fer me.
An' a little pas' that, in the springtime
With the las' signs o' winter gone,
The groun' gets like a great big sponge
But dry an' mealy afore long.
An' the grass looks gray 'long the road-bank,
Gradu'ly turnin' to bright green,
An' the colts 'at I turn in the medder
Air a sheddin', smooth an' clean.
An' when night comes on, in the holler
There's a full band o' singin' frogs
That don't seem ter keer ter sing ter-gether
Settin' down thar 'mong the bogs.
An' I notice, through the hull blame springtime
That the robins air tunin' up so,
That in summer they warble jes heavenly
From 'mong the pink an' white tree blows;
Long in cherry-time they're thievish,
But, blame 'em! jes let 'em go,
We cain't listen ter high-toned music
'Thout payin' fer it, ye know.
The grove-lot is full o' posies
In the early summer days,
'Ith Bluebells, Dutchman's-breeches,
Sweet Williams, an' 'sech as they.
Purty leetle innercents a noddin'
'Long 'side the cow-path there,

A beckonin' an' swayin' 'ith the blue-grass.
 Jes' smellin' sweet, growin' there.
 An' when hayin' time is nearin',
 The quail, on the paster gate,
 Whistles "More Wet," an' it is as sure ter rain
 As if he was impendin' Fate.
 But I like ter hear his music
 Floatin' 'cross the fields that way,
 Jes like he was 'tem'tin' ter say it clearer
 Each time he said it that day.
 E'en the yaller-hammer's rattle is music
 From the orchard to my listenin' ear,
 An' I peep through the shutters ter see 'im,
 In the hot sun, pipin' clear.
 When the shadders grow longer an' longer
 The ole place is grander ter see,
 An' wanderin' down toward the paster, the distant
 Lowin' of cattle is wafted ter me.
 Here an' there in the dusk o' the evenin'
 The firefly's lights sparkle, low,
 An' no purtier sight can I wish fer
 Than when they're thicker'n bees, don't ye know.
 An' so on, through the gran' ole seasons,
 Sech nater has real charm fer me,
 An' I guess it's an' innercent pleasure
 'At the Lord intended 'at we
 Should see an' enjoy, 'long our journey,
 'Mid the troubles an' worries, an' so

I'm thankfel to see an' to hear sech
Ter brighten the years as I go.
So when there ain't nothin' ter pester,
I jes go out o' doors an' aroun',
An' fill chuck full, nigh to burstin',
With sech purty sights an' sweet sounds.

THE HOMEWARD JOURNEY

Down the road that the sumacs skirt,
Where in heaps and hollows lies the powdered dirt
Flanked by rag-weed and horse-mint and clover,
Where blue grass roams the road-side over,
Where the chirping of a robin is wafted along
And is blended with the caroling of another's sweet
song,

The old man in his wagon is wending his way
Homeward from town, at the close of the day.
The last long rays of the setting sun
Lingers and touches ere the night is begun,
The glimmering landscape with a deep, mellow light
That is misty and golden, as it sinks out of sight.
It gleams on equipages of the farms of today,
As homeward the farmers cheerfully pass on their
way,

With bow and remark to the old man as they go
Swiftly by him (of half a century ago),
With his team of fat horses, quiet and staid,
Dancing down hollows and walking up grade;
They soon long have left him and passed from his
sight.

The lowing of cattle, with the coming of night,
Resounds from the meadows as he passes along,
With the cowbell's tinkle blends the meadow lark's
song.

The hollow sounding rocking of the wagon's worn
wheels

Rumbles down the hills. From the summer's green
fields

The farm hands and horses are hurrying home.

Like a silvery canoe in a blue sea lone

Sails the new moon in the clear summer sky.

The old man gazes with a long drawn sigh,

At last he is almost home,

He is almost home.

All withered and thin are his palsied hands,

The breezes toy with the silvery strands

Of his long, thin hair, 'neath his straw's broad rim;

The once keen eyes are faded and dim,

The smooth fair brow is furrowed with care,

His garments of a style man used to wear.

He is blithe and cheerful from day unto day.

His smile is as sunny, his voice is as gay,

As ever they were when he was young

And life was a song that was yet unsung.

Far down the road with the shades of night,

A glow from his window, like a beacon light,

Gleams out in the darkness at the end of the way—

A welcome home at the close of day.

And as now, may there be then,

As he passes along in the march of men,

A sublime faith, like a beacon light,

Gleaming o'er his pathway at life's sad night

To guide him safely home,

For he is almost home,

He is almost home.

THE HERMIT

The souging and whining of the trees overhead,
As the autumn wind drifts through the leaves that
are dead,

The cries of the birds that are echoed again,
Here, afar from the haunts of civilized men,
Where the mountains bold peaks gleam out in the
sun

High above where the silver thread of the river is
run,

I look from my couch at the wonders of God,
And feel not so poor in my lone hunting lodge.

The valleys blue shadows are dimpled with light
That mellows the scene for my poor craving sight,
And the eagle's loud scream rings out o'er the plain
From the cliff where she rests ere she rises again.
Afar from my loved one, that my life has undone,
Afar from all mankind where my life was begun,
Alone in this trouble, with naught but my God,
I feel not so fierce in my lone hunting lodge.

Where the vast silent expanses sweetly soothe brain,
Where the great depths and heights abash and lessen
my pain,

And where, in the night watches, looking through
dusk afar,

I learn man's significance, 'neath the calm quiet stars.
Though with my silent companions,—my dog and
my gun—

I starve on my bed when life's last day is won,
I meditate and strive to be closer to God,
And I feel not so lone in my poor hunting lodge.

GOLDEN BUTTERFLIES

Over the swaying grasses,
 Lilting,
 Tilting,
Above the wild flower masses,
 All so lightly dip and rise.
With merry fluttering dashes,
 Flinging,
 Clinging,
Like merry elfish lasses,
 Oh! golden butterflies.

Where the brook lies calmly sleeping,
 Winging,
 Bringing,
And the breeze is gaily fleeting,
 There with buttercups each vie.
In swarms each lend gay greeting,
 Sipping,
 Flitting,
And the merry pace all keeping,
 Oh! golden butterflies.

With airy, fairy dancing,
 Glancing,
 Prancing,
With joy the most entrancing,
 Until late Summer dies.
Through yellow sunshine lancing,
 Flipping,
 Tripping,
Into Autumn's days advancing,
 Oh! golden butterflies.

DOWN IN HAPPY VALLEY

Loudly rings the voices of children at play,
Loudly mocks the echo from over the way;
On the crest of a hill jolts a teamster along
And merrily rolls his rollicking song.
The flocks on the home-path are filing their way
Deep into the valley at the closing of day;
Green are the slopes and the valley between,
Where nestle the homesteads in peaceful dream.
In the oak's deep shade the smith's shop stands,
Where the river winds through this fruitful land;
Strong is the smithy, his arm stoutly swings,
Heavy the hammer, the anvil rings,
While the hillsides fling back in loud halloo
 "Ring O, Ring O,"
Down in Happy Valley.

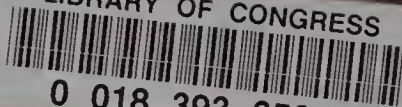
THE CALL OF NATURE

Ye, who love the busy cities,
Love their culture and their pleasures,
And their turmoil and their strivings,
Harken to the call of Nature
That is sounding, deeply sounding,
Far off o'er the lonely prairies;
Ringing with a deep toned measure,
Till the soul is touched and softened
By the impact of that calling.
That like voices of the spring winds
Call to us to halt, consider
What the meaning of their measure.
Far off where the wind and sunshine,
Where the woods and sloping meadows
Are not cumbered, are not hampered,
There in the rich and fertile valley
Of the father of the rivers,
The mighty Mississippi—
Where the loam is deep and fertile,
And the sunshine and the rainfall
Blends 'neath Nature's kindest favor
To replenish and to answer
All the needs her children cherish
——Sounds a myriad of voices,
That though blended with each other
Till the ear can scarce unravel,

Scarce distinguish pitch or ranges;
Sounds a note so full of interest,
Fleeting over hill and hollow,
Floating lightly on the zephyrs,
Mystical, secretive,
Leading boldly on forever.
There the rustling, whispering corn leaves
Flap and flutter in the red rays
Of the sun, throughout the summer,
That pours relentlessly upon them;
Till the air is pungent, odorous,
With the sap of maize, that springing
Spreads a mystery about all.
And the spirit of the Season—
'Mid the scenes of woods and prairie,
'Mid the tones of wind and water,
—Interprets thus, the sound that's ringing
(Of this myriad of voices)
"Come, oh, come far back to Nature,
Ye, the weak and o'er burdened,
Ye, the sad and heavy hearted,
Back to life's simple pleasures,
Oh, ye followers of men!"



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